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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3278

INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFSS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFUUU/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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STATE FOR AF/SPG, AF/RSA, AF/SE, AND IO/PSC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [SU](#) [CD](#) [AU](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: DARFUR: UN A/SYG FOR PEACE-KEEPING DISCUSSES UN ASSISTANCE TO AMIS WITH SUDAN AND AU

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. UN A/SYG for Peace-keeping Operations Annabi said November 11-12 meetings with President Bashir, FM Lam Akol and other GOS principals resulted in an affirmation that the GOS would accept UN packages of "light" and "heavy" assistance to the AU Mission in Sudan, despite Sudan's continued rejection of UNSCR 1706 and its call for UN transition as infringement on Sudanese sovereignty. The GOS also reversed its previous insistence on the establishment of a tripartite (UN-AU-GOS) committee that would review AU needs. Bashir and other GOS principals continued to reject UN personnel wearing UN insignia (i.e., blue berets or helmets), while Annabi underscored the need to distinguish UN from AU peace-keepers in order to promote transparency. In tripartite discussions on November 13, the GOS reiterated its rejection of UN transition, but not of UN support to AMIS. The UN and AU expect to conclude a MOU on technical aspects of how to account for UN personnel and equipment provided to assist AMIS. UN U/SYG Guehenno will participate in November 16 ministerial-level talks in Addis Ababa, which he expects will allow the UN to strengthen AMIS while promoting confidence-building with the GOS in the long term. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On November 14, DCM and deputy pol-econ counselor attended briefing of P-5 representatives given by UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations Hedi Annabi and UNMIS Officer-in-Charge Taye-Brook Zerihoun. Annabi provided a readout of November 11 and 12 meetings with Government of Sudan officials in Khartoum, and of November 13 tripartite talks in Addis among the UN, AU, and the GOS.

SUDAN'S FM ACCEPTS UN ASSISTANCE TO AMIS

13. (SBU) Annabi explained said his visit to Khartoum was intended to dissuade the GOS from requiring the adoption of a draft tripartite (UN-AU-GOS) protocol that placed "a number of caveats" and restrictions on the status of UN forces in Sudan, and that proposed establishing a tripartite committee to determine the AU's needs. Sudan had sought to embroil the UN deployment in bureaucracy, Annabi said, by proposing such a protocol on November 3, six weeks after September 22 correspondence from the UN and the AU had provided details of the package of "light" UN assistance (i.e., comprising 105 UN military officers, 33 police, 48 international staff, and equipment) to Sudan's President Bashir. The GOS had accepted

the "light" package of assistance and proposed a protocol on modalities on October 3; on October 7, UN SYG Annan replied that the existing status-of-forces agreement (SOFA) between the GOS and UNMIS should apply.

14. (SBU) Annabi said Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol ultimately agreed to a tripartite mechanism that would facilitate the implementation of the UN's support package to the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and that would promote transparency through the exchange of information. The FM also agreed that the current SOFA between the GOS and UNMIS would apply to incoming UN personnel assisting AMIS. Annabi said that when MFA advisors objected, the FM said he had discussed these issues with President Bashir.

15. (SBU) FM Lam Akol reiterated GOS opposition to AMIS transitioning to a UN peace-keeping operation, but welcomed both the "light" and "heavy" support packages described in the UN SYG's July 28 report (S/2006/591), Annabi said. The GOS said it would accept UN "enabling units" (logistics, communications, etc.) to help strengthen AMIS operations and effectiveness, Annabi added, so long as they were under the AU's command and control. Annabi said he underscored that UN military forces deployed through the assistance packages would fall under the operational control of the AU, but not UN police or civilian staff (such as administration or finance). The UN affirmed its commitment to deploying with "full transparency," he said.

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WEARING BLUE BERETS REMAINS POINT OF CONTENTION
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16. (SBU) Whether UN peace-keepers would wear UN insignia

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(i.e., blue berets or blue helmets) remains a key point of contention for GOS and some AU officials. Working-level AU officials oppose the wearing of UN insignia, believing it would signal a separate chain of command, Annabi said. Annabi said he told Sudanese Defense Minister Abdul-Rahim Mohammed that UN personnel would be embedded within the AU, have no parallel agenda, but be administered (recruited, paid, and disciplined, if necessary) by the UN. As UN personnel, they would wear UN insignia. The defense minister said this was "unacceptable," and that the UN's 105 officers would metamorphose into 300, then 3,000 -- marking the "beginning of the UN invasion." Annabi said he responded that the UN's blue beret was a symbol of peace, having received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988, and was needed for full transparency: to distinguish UN from AU personnel. MFA advisors sought to calm the defense minister down, Annabi noted.

17. (SBU) President Bashir also objected to the wearing of UN insignia, but reiterated GOS acceptance of the UN light and heavy support packages, Annabi said. The GOS was "painting itself into a corner" with "irrational concerns," Annabi said. Annabi cited propaganda statements, including from Bashir himself, that there would never be UN blue berets in Sudan, and that, if they appeared, Bashir would be the first to oppose such "invaders." Annabi said that when Sudanese intelligence chief Salah Abdallah Gosh threatened to expel any individuals with blue berets, Annabi responded that it would be difficult to continue working with the GOS if they continued to expulsions. Presidential advisor and former FM Mustapha Ismail offered to help address the insignia issue, Annabi said.

18. (SBU) While Annabi deferred to UN member states to decide the issue, his comments suggested opposition to abandoning UN insignia: Annabi raised concern about legal liability, and said he lacked the authority to let this principle "go down the drain." He noted that the UN's humanitarian operation in Sudan was the world's largest; UN staff in Sudan were already wearing blue berets, but faced harassment.

SUDANESE FM REJECTS UNSCR 1706 AS INFRINGEMENT ON SOVEREIGNTY

¶9. (SBU) Annabi said November 13 tripartite talks in Addis Ababa, which the September 20 AU PSC communique had called for, had been productive. Participants included Republic of Congo FM Rodolphe Adada (November chair of the AU PSC); AU Peace and Security Commissioner Said Djinnit, officials from AMIS and the AU Darfur Integrated Task Force; FM Lam Akol and Sudan's new permrep to the UN.

-- According to Annabi, Adada reviewed PSC communiqués and the history of the conflict. Adada noted that the UNSC Presidency (Peru) had not accepted the invitation to participate in the meeting, but "did not make an issue of it."

-- Djinnit discussed how issues raised by the AU PSC in its communiqués, such as retaining the "African character" of the mission, had not been fully incorporated into UNSCR 1706.

Annabi said he also discussed with Djinnit "hesitation, if not resentment" by some AU officials of accepting embedded UN personnel. AU Commission, AMIS, and AU DITF officials required a day of internal consultations to harmonize their own varying positions, Annabi said.

-- Nevertheless, Djinnit and Annabi expected to conclude a bilateral UN-AU MOU that would address technical aspects of how to handle UN personnel and equipment assigned to AMIS. While the GOS may have some concerns about the MOU, "the UN can't write off 50 years of rules and regulations just because the GOS doesn't like it," Annabi said.

-- FM Lam Akol confirmed GOS agreement that the UN provide assistance to AMIS, but said that UNSCR 1706 was "yesterday's story," as it was unacceptable and infringed on Sudan's sovereignty. Annabi said he responded that UNSCR 1706 made clear that deployment was subject to GOS consent; while others imposed peace enforcement under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, a UN force would conduct peace-keeping. Annabi said that over three visits to Sudan, the UN had consistently stated, both publicly and privately, that it would not impose itself. Annabi said he refrained from a detailed discussion of UNSCR 1706 with the GOS, as it would not be productive to

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debate the GOS's rejection.

UN SYG CONSIDERING POSSIBLE UN FUNDING FOR AMIS

¶10. (SBU) Annabi reported that he informed the AU and GOS that the UN SYG was prepared to go before the UN General Assembly to request funding by the UN for AMIS. While the cost of light and heavy support packages was USD 21-22 million and at least USD 55 million respectively, this assistance would not solve "fundamental logistical and financial problems of the African Union." Annabi noted, however, that UN funding of AMIS would require the deployment of a civilian UN element to control and disperse funds. He added that the UN would also expect to play a stronger political role in Sudan: "Peace-keeping can never be a substitute for a political process."

UN ASSESSMENT TEAM TO VISIT CHAD AND C.A.R.

¶11. (SBU) Annabi said he informed GOS interlocutors in Khartoum, and others at the November 13 tripartite meeting, that the UN would send an assessment mission to Chad and the Central African Republic to determine what could be done to improve security in border areas and IDP camps. The UNSC had been briefed on light and heavy options for UN deployment, which could occur soon, subject to security conditions.

NOV. 16 MINISTERIAL TO DISCUSS STRENGTHENING AMIS

¶12. (SBU) UN U/SYG for Peace-keeping Operations Jean Marie Guehenno would brief the UNSC today on these meetings, as well as discuss the UN's non-paper on options for AMIS: ranging from light and heavy support packages, to "hybrid" deployment with "various degrees of integration," Annabi said. The non-paper also highlighted the issue of funding.

¶13. (SBU) While Annabi would return to UNHQ, Guehenno would attend the November 16 AU-EU-UN-League of Arab States meeting in Addis with P-5 representatives. Guehenno expected the meeting to discuss with stakeholders, "in the presence of Sudan, possible steps to make the AU mission more effective, as we continue to work with the GOS to get them to agree to a UN operation," Annabi said. In the long-term, such consultations could serve as a confidence-building measure, while strengthening AMIS in the short-term. Annabi noted that there was currently no alternative to AMIS, and that its withdrawal would precipitate a humanitarian disaster. The November 16 meeting was also expected to help shape consultations leading up to the November 24 summit-level AU PSC, which was expected to extend the mandate of AMIS beyond December 31 to at least July 2007, Annabi said.

¶14. (SBU) The AU sought to discuss the proposed "heavy" assistance to AMIS, Annabi said, which would comprise at least 1,000 additional UN military personnel, 700 police, support units, more significant equipment, and some navigation assets. Annabi expressed concern about force generation: "We can only deploy the people we get." Concerns about force protection and the conditions of deployment had deterred potential troop-contributing countries from offering many personnel; even the light package required some positions to be filled by recruitment, he said.
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